

# Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) **Environmental Scan**

**Executive Summary**

# **Newborn: An Environmental Scan of Available Resources and a Preliminary Needs Assessment for Saskatchewan Health Care Providers**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are spread through sexual contact. While most STIs can be treated, some can only be controlled (i.e., some are not curable). If left untreated, STIs can lead to a number of long-term health problems including chronic hepatitis, and cervical and other cancers. Untreated STIs can also cause serious health issues affecting fertility, pregnancy, and the health of newborn babies. Many individuals, particularly adolescents and young adults, have little or no knowledge about these effects. Therefore, information resources focused on these effects are important in order to reduce the incidence of STIs and their negative consequences on fertility, pregnancy, and newborn babies.

The purpose of the current project was twofold: 1. to conduct a provincial, national, and international environmental scan of available education resources focused on the effects of STIs on fertility, pregnancy, and the newborn; and 2. to conduct a preliminary provincial assessment of health and allied health professionals need for resources in this area.

The goal of the environmental scan was to identify resources that provided information and education specific to the impact of STIs on fertility, pregnancy, and the newborn. The information collected for the provincial environmental scan and needs assessment came from internet searches, personal emails, telephone conversations, and visits to appropriate organizations in Saskatchewan. Organizations contacted included provincial health regions and health authorities, sexual health centres and clinics, physicians' offices providing prenatal care, new parent organizations, and First Nations Tribal Councils and health centers. The national and international scan was conducted using a thorough internet search.

The preliminary provincial needs assessment revealed that health professionals in Saskatchewan see a need for information resources specific to the effects of STIs on fertility, pregnancy, and the newborn (95% of those contacted). The results of the environmental scan indicate that these resources are relatively scarce, particularly when compared to the number of resources dedicated to STIs in general. This is particularly true in Saskatchewan, where the majority of people contacted rely on one-on-one education to educate about the impact of STIs on fertility, pregnancy and the newborn (64%). This type of education, though, is generally only provided after a person has tested positive for an STI. Other reported forms of education included school presentations (22%), prenatal classes (9%), and community presentations (2%). Of those people using resources for education specific to the impact of STIs on fertility and pregnancy, 20% currently use brochures, while 9% refer clients to websites.

Several recommendations were made based on these findings. First, because there is a lack of existing resources and health care professionals have expressed a need for such resources, the current report recommends that resources be developed that focus specifically on the effects of STIs on fertility, pregnancy, and the newborn. Second, based on the requests of health care professionals in Saskatchewan, these resources should be made available online in such a way that they can be downloaded and printed for patients and clients. Finally, a downloadable PowerPoint presentation on the effects of STIs on fertility, pregnancy, and the newborn should be created. The creation of such a presentation, which could be updated with relative ease, would ensure that accurate information is being shared in presentations. In terms of currently existing information resources, several useful websites were recommended by health care professionals and/or were found during the national and international scan. Links to these websites are posted on the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's website, under 'Sexually Transmitted Infections and Reproductive Health.'

The findings from the current report will provide the basis for the adaptation and/or creation of education resources specific to STIs and reproductive health for both the general public and health professionals. These resources will be disseminated throughout Saskatchewan and /or made available online, in order to provide education about the impact of STIs on fertility, pregnancy, and the newborn. If created resources are accessed by health care professionals and are shared with patients and clients, knowledge about the impact of STIs on reproductive health should increase in Saskatchewan. It is hoped that such an increase in knowledge will lead to a decrease in risky sexual behaviours and STI rates. It is also hoped that this increase in knowledge will lead to an increase in the use of STI screening during the preconception period and during pregnancy, thereby decreasing STI-related effects on reproductive health.